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# SOLDIER—PASTOR MARTYR



WANG CHEN PEI

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By

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WANG CHEN PEI was a soldier in the first days of his young manhood. Six feet tall and stalwart. With head thrown back and fine freedom of motion in his powerful frame he was a picture of youth rejoicing in his strength.

He was at home in his native village when his father left for a trip to Peking. It was an arduous journey of thirteen days' travel by cart. The allotted time of absence passed and the father did not return. Days grew to weeks and then Chen Pei vowed a vow. He vowed that if the gods would bring back his father to his anxious family, he would then take the whole family on a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of Tai,

where they would prostrate themselves and give thanks. The vow was made—the father returned. There was rejoicing and they told him of the vow. The father said: “No, no, my son. We surely shall give thanks, but not at Tai or any other mountain, neither before any of all the gods we have known in the past. I have found the true God. To him we shall give thanks.” The old man gathered his wondering family about him and with speech and manner that silenced all questions, the father told the story of how, in Peking, he had found the true God.

Who can picture its telling in a Pagan village to ears accustomed to tales of many gods that now heard for the first time of the one God and His Son?

The substance of the story was as follows:

The venerable Mr. Wang while traversing a great street of China's capital city, observed a throng passing in and out of a small building that opened upon the street. On approaching he learned that a foreigner was talking inside. He stepped in to have a look at the foreigner. Being a well bred gentleman he quietly seated himself and

looked about. Presently what the foreigner was saying arrested his attention. He moved to a front seat and listened intently. Here was answer to many questions. Here was supply for many a need. Can it be true? Mr. Wang waited until the preacher sat down, for this foreigner was a Methodist missionary and this building was a Methodist street chapel. Then Mr. Wang came forward and asked questions concerning what he had heard. The missionary became interested in the intelligent questioner and invited him to come to the mission in a near-by street and stay a few days until he could satisfy his questioning mind and heart. The missionary gave Mr. Wang a room, a Bible, and helps for the study of the Bible. The old man read and studied, and questioned the missionaries in daily interviews. Poring over the wonderful story day by day, it sunk into his soul and he was converted. Then he remembered that the days of his absence from home had lengthened beyond expectation, and fearing that his family might be anxious, he bade adieu to the missionaries, first securing from them a promise to visit him in his village home, and hastened to return to his family.

Months passed, for there was much to be done in that Peking mission, and never enough workers for the doing of it all; then the missionaries packed a cart with Bibles and tracts, with bedding and food, bestrode their horses and set off for Au Chia in Shang Tung, the home of Mr. Wang. They stopped in villages along the way and preached in the streets, distributed tracts and Bibles, held inquiry meetings in the inns, and came, finally to Au Chia. There they found that Mr. Wang had taught his family the new way of salvation. The old man announced to the joyfully received missionaries that all in his house waited the coming of the missionary that they might be baptized.

Chen Pei was baptized with the rest. Also his mother whom he afterward wheeled to Peking in a wheel-barrow, four hundred miles away, where she might learn to read the Bible for herself. This was after the death of his father. His father had hoped to preach, but was taken ill and knew that his hope could not be realized, but he rejoiced that he had a son to take up the work which he himself would so gladly have done.

Chen Pei finished the course of the Training School in Peking and became a preacher and vigorous soldier of the Cross. He knew no physical fear and was also a fearless spiritual leader. He often gave safe escort to the girls of the Peking school to and from home in their vacation days. His powerful figure, his fearless manner, and masterful bearing made him a tower of strength to the girls, and to timid church members later on in the beginning of the persecution of 1900, when he held his own through stormy days in spite of threats and open demonstrations. He was in Peking when the final crash came and the siege of Peking was ushered in, by a storm of bullets that continued until the allies came and put an end to the storm.

The Japanese soldiers who, with the Italians, guarded the premises in which nearly three hundred native Christians were given refuge, organized a spear corps and made Chen Pei the captain of the spear men. Spears were the only arms available, so with spears Chen Pei and his men were armed. Their particular duty was to watch for any of the enemy who might have a mind to come over the wall of their refuge,

and punch them into a change of mind. One day when leading his spear men Chen Pei was shot. They laid him upon a stretcher and carried him into the British Legation and would have carried him into the hospital there, but his agony was so extreme that they laid him upon the ground outside the door and built a mat covering to protect him from the sun. His son, the grandson of the old Mr. Wang, sat beside him and fanned him until his spirit was freed.

A friend who had known Chen Pei since the days of his conversion and through all his days of service, kneeled beside him and asked in all tenderness, "How is it with you now, Chen Pei?" Slowly, feebly, he replied, "My body is in great agony, but my heart is at peace, Jesus is here."

What was it not worth to have had a part in sending the missionaries who led Chen Pei's father and Chen Pei himself into the right way? What was it not worth to have had a part in building the chapel where Mr. Wang first heard of God and Jesus? What was it not worth to have had a part in supplying the missionaries' carts with tracts and Bibles,—to have had a part

in building the Training School to fit such men for preaching? There are other Mr. Wangs. There are other Chen Peis, but few missionaries. There are many cities and few chapels,—many to be taught and few schools; and the command still abides, “Go ye into all the world and teach.”

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